

Pepe Escobar: How Iran Just DESTROYED 50 Years of US DOMINANCE in the Middle East

#Nima

Hi, everybody. Today is Thursday, April 9th, 2026, and our dear friend, our brother, Pepe Escobar, is here with us. Welcome, Pepe.

#Pepe

Always a pleasure to be with you, Nima, and with our audience. Greetings from Buddhist Southeast Asia. It's still early—it's only 10 at night. We have a long night ahead.

#Nima

Pepe, let's start with the ceasefire — the two-week ceasefire — and the negotiations that are going to happen. I want to know your understanding of what has happened so far.

#Pepe

Well, it's extremely complicated because the situation started unraveling the minute after the ceasefire was announced. In fact, it was blown up within the first ten hours, and practically everyone across the spectrum was convinced it was dead. But then, from yesterday to today, it somehow resuscitated. Very, very important—once again, the role of a go-between. In my latest column, I talked in some detail about the role of Pakistan—not as mediators or architects of the ceasefire, but as messengers, the go-betweens. They were passing messages back and forth, and this apparently led to enormous misunderstandings. The number one issue is the version in English that the Americans got of the Iranian ten-point plan.

Apparently, the original version in Farsi is quite different from the version in English that the Americans received. But assuming the people in the White House can read—that's not a guarantee. We know that the baboon of barbaria doesn't read anything, but he has minions who read for him. They could have gone to X; it was published there for days—the Iranian ten-point plan, in English. Very, very simple. And this was exactly the first version translated into English and available on X for everyone to read. So the accusation that Pakistan may have interfered and passed along a wrong or

badly translated version to the U.S. doesn't hold. We know the White House lies all the time. And on top of that, they started lying immediately after the ceasefire—apparently, they started lying about Lebanon.

Prime Minister Sharif published once again on X, in English, a post stating that Lebanon is included. Everybody can check that on X. But the Americans immediately afterward started saying, "No, Lebanon is not included." And the stupid blonde spokesperson for the White House said, "No, it's not included." On top of that, she said, "Ah, no, and the ten-pointer is absolutely ridiculous, etc. We threw it into the garbage bin." So this was the White House already destroying something they had theoretically agreed upon before. Typical White House, right? Once again, Pakistan acted as mediator. Between yesterday and today, the Pakistanis once again promised Tehran, "Look, the Americans told us they are going to restrain the genocidal war criminal in Tel Aviv."

After, of course, he had gone on an absolutely demented rampage all across Lebanon—killing people not only in Beirut but everywhere. Something absolutely horrible, Gaza-style. And Iran was ready to respond. Really, highway to hell. So we were, thanks to the Pakistanis once again, saying, "Okay, we trust you—at least probably for the last time. We're going to send our delegation to Islamabad." They'll probably be arriving tonight in Islamabad. I know where they're staying—I stayed there, Nima. The Serena Hotel in Islamabad. It's a wonderful hotel. By the way, they expelled everybody; now it's a fortress, because both delegations are going to be there. But Vance is going to be at the American Embassy in Islamabad, with the war setup around the embassy.

Typical. Well... the substance of all that. On the Iranian side, we're going to have Araghchi and Qalibaf. That's predictable. They've been leading these negotiations—the back and forth, including the subterranean ones. And on the American side, we're going to have J.D. Vance—James David Vance. I was discussing this with you, Nima, before we were on air, thinking clearly about his legacy and building his future as a presidential candidate, of course. He would love to pose as the statesman who brought peace—whatever we can call it—between the U.S. and Iran. But we also have Dumb and Dumber at the table: Witkoff and Kushner. You know, it's absolutely impossible, off the top of our heads, to come up with a metaphor to explain the Taoist patience of the Iranians, once again sitting at the table with these two idiots who bring nothing whatsoever—no expertise, no diplomatic skills, no reasoning, nothing.

But it's the official White House-designated delegation. So the real negotiation will be between Vance and Qalibaf—no question about that. What can they possibly achieve if we compare the Iranian ten points and the American fifteen points? Both sides are totally aware, point by point, of the other's position. And, as we all know—and our audience knows—everything is absolutely incompatible. So how do you bridge that gap? Okay, it could last a weekend, maybe go on for a few days, but within a few days it would be practically impossible. Is Iran negotiating from a position of strength? I'd like to ask you, Nima, after I finish here—how do you see it? I'd say that for the moment, the landscape is quite muddy and fuzzy.

They didn't need a ceasefire. Now Iran has the initiative on every front—especially on the most important one, the Strait of Hormuz, the real game changer. So they don't need a ceasefire. They were starting to ramp up, I'd say, the next stage of the decentralized mosaic strategy, using their latest missiles, considering that Israel has practically run out of interceptors. They can bomb Israel any way they want from now on. So why does the empire of chaos and the absent syndicate need a ceasefire? To redeploy. It's an operational pause. We have to see this from the operational point of view—the military operational point of view—much more than the geopolitical one.

What they can do in two weeks—not much, but something that's already ongoing—is pre-position all the assets they have, including 50,000 troops, to try once again a mini ground invasion somewhere in the Persian Gulf—Qeshm Island, whatever that is, or Kharg, which is still far away. But there's this American obsession that if they take Kharg, they cut off Iranian oil exports. So the whole situation, for the moment, ceasefire-wise, favors this American redeployment and pause. The Iranians, as you know, Nima, are perfectly aware of that. And when they say they have their finger on the trigger—yes, they know this thing can restart anytime. And they're ready. And of course, they're also redeploying their forces and reorganizing the decentralized mosaic.

But then there's something I couldn't confirm, and it's a very, very worrying development if it's true. It's absolutely impossible to confirm this with the Chinese, and obviously military sources in Iran won't volunteer this information. Apparently, there were three cargoes from China that landed in Tehran between yesterday and today—three huge cargo planes, probably bringing hardcore military material to Iran. There's a possibility that Iran was running out of essential munitions, and the Chinese are helping. We don't know; there's no way to confirm that. But this would explain why China, at the last minute, influenced Iran to take the ceasefire—because until literally the last minute, Iran was inclined not to take it.

Okay, what are we going to get out of it? After all that absolutely crazy back-and-forth across the Muslim world—WhatsApp, phone calls, conversations lasting hours or even more than a day—the Chinese, at the last minute, told Iran, "Okay, take it." There are lots of actors, intercontinental in fact, who will appreciate that you're negotiating. So, in terms of increasing your political capital, it's a good thing. "We have your back." That's the Chinese talking to Iran, the way we interpret it. But we don't really know how deep China's support for Iran goes. And considering that these decisions, Nima, in Beijing, are very opaque—you never really know how they make them.

And especially for us foreigners, it's off-limits. It's impossible for us to know. So, considering our contacts or, you know, the analysts we talk to, we can have an idea. But there are many elements that suggest China told Iran, "Sit down and talk," while the Chinese are also coordinating with Iran militarily. At the same time, when it comes to the Strait of Hormuz—until one or two days ago—the strait was closed again and open only for a few ships a day. The Chinese ships had no problem. And, very important for China, this toll booth is being operated in yuan, with payment through CIPS, the Chinese international payment system. This is the beginning of the petro-yuan, you know, taking shape.

So, from a Chinese point of view, this is steady, and it's not going to change. What could change is if major countries officially accept that the Strait of Hormuz is now managed by Iran and submit to its rules. Then there's going to be a stampede of nations around the world following suit. And guess who's on the front line? South Korea. They sent a special emissary to Iran, probably to discuss the passage of tankers going to South Korea. And of course, they'll abide by the new rules. So if South Korea officially accepts those rules, that's it—everybody else will follow. Iran is playing with that as well, because they know that a closed Strait of Hormuz, or even a nearly closed one, means Asia is bleeding.

Literally. So the number two victims are not the U.S.—they're Europe and Asia. And obviously, Asian nations are mobilizing, especially South Korea, much more than Japan. Japan is an extremely complicated case, and it's an American vassal. South Korea has more leeway. So this is where we are at the moment. The way this whole thing is interconnected is extremely complex, and Iran has to juggle all these variables. At the same time, because Iran now has a different stature globally, it's starting to be seen as—well, I wouldn't say a big power, but an emerging big power on the global stage. They have to manage this new political capital. Right.

So it's a very uncomfortable situation to sit down with these genocidalists at the same table for a ceasefire that mostly benefits the U.S. We're going to see—let's say, we're going to see the tenor and tone of the first day of the negotiations, where this is going, or if it's collapsing immediately. Every scenario is possible. But I think for most of us, the most important element in the big picture is how complex the chessboard is that Iran has to navigate, and they cannot make a single mistake. That's how difficult it is, right? Okay, Nima, now I'm asking you practically the same question. How do you see the pros and cons of Iran sitting at the same table in Islamabad, convinced by the Pakistanis that there's going to be some sort of meaningful dialogue with the Americans? And, of course, there won't be interference by the desk cult.

#Nima

I think those three cargoes you mentioned are basically related to the defensive side of Iran's military operations—the country's defensive capabilities. Because in terms of offense, they don't have any shortage. But it seems that, through some kind of behind-the-scenes negotiations, the Chinese government convinced Iran that they could make improvements in a short period of time. If the talks fail, they can still enhance their capabilities in defensive areas—electronic warfare, upgrades to the air defense system, that sort of thing. I think that was the whole agenda: let's try to negotiate with the United States.

Let's give it two weeks of some sort of ceasefire and see what happens. On the other hand, Iran has been in communication with the government in Pakistan. It's not something new, Pepe. What's been agreed on so far is a 10-point plan. If I'm not mistaken, four days ago Iran presented those plans—it was reiterated. It wasn't just four days ago; they've been talking about these 10 points long before

that. But what's happening now is a drastic change on the part of the Trump administration as well, after that failed raid on Iranian soil in the southern part of Isfahan.

Because that gave them some sort of understanding of what a ground invasion of Iran would look like. What would be the reaction from Iran? What are the capabilities of the Iranian army on the ground? I think there are many factors to consider. China was somehow promising Iran improvements in its defensive capabilities, and Iran saw that this short period of time might influence or even improve the whole conflict—their ability to sustain a war for such a long time. On the other hand, you see Donald Trump somehow failing in the latest attack on Iran. It was a raid.

They wanted to do something underground, but it was a huge failure. We're going to learn more in the near future, I hope, about the casualties from that operation, because we haven't heard anything about them. It's all about one pilot being rescued from Iran—that's a total lie. Nobody would believe that. This is the calculation on the part of the Iranians. We know that the first point in this 10-point plan was that the war would end on all fronts. They're not going to talk about just Iran and the United States. That's why this Lebanese factor is coming into the equation right now—because without Lebanon, there is no ceasefire after all.

#Pepe

Absolutely. Okay, I have another question for you. Do you see a split at the highest level of the government in Tehran, especially inside the Supreme National Council? Correct me if I'm wrong—there are 13 members in the Supreme National Council, right? Ghalibaf is one of them. That's very, very important. But there are some opposition-aligned people who are, we can say, reformists—almost the fifth-columnist camp. And they got a boost after Zarif published that ghastly opinion piece in **Foreign Affairs**, which was basically a surrender manifesto. I read it again a few days ago, and then I think yesterday I read it again, and it still sounds like a surrender manifesto. And obviously, the Americans loved it because it gave them an opening to start manipulating some figures close to the presidency. Do you see a split, or is this just superficial?

#Nima

No, nothing like that is happening in the leadership. When we talk about Zarif—Jawad Zarif—he's not part of the leadership. He's on the margins of the reformist side of Iranian politics. That's why what Zarif is trying to do, I'd argue, isn't that important when it comes to domestic policy. In the West, they look at him as if he's the decision-maker, but that's not the case. He can explain how he sees the conflict, how he sees it ending, how he sees the end of this war—but that doesn't necessarily influence the real decision-makers in Iran. You mentioned Pezeshkian and his team. They're not getting closer; they're very attached, very close to Ghalibaf, the head of the parliament. Very much so.

I would argue they're following the same kind of policy right now. That's why I think this attack has unified all the political parties in Iran. I'm talking about the people who are influential, who matter in the decision-making centers of Iran. They're totally unified—there's no gap, no difference between them. You can talk about domestic policy—sure, they have their differences there. But right now, that's not the issue. Right now, it's about foreign policy, about how to stand up to the United States. That's why they're completely unified, ready to go along with any plan that comes up. It's going to be a unified plan, not something separate from Ghalibaf and his team or different for Pezeshkian. No, they're all on the same page right now, in my opinion.

#Pepe

So would you say the decision to accept the ceasefire and go to Islamabad—was that consensual at the Supreme National Council, or do you think there was a lot of friction before they came to a final conclusion? And listening to the street, right, Nima? Because the Iranian street is, I'd say, practically completely against any accommodation with the Americans.

#Nima

Exactly. But what's happening, Pepe, is that there are a lot of discussions going on in Iran. Just imagine the communication between Iran and China, Iran and Russia, Iran and, domestically, even some coordination with Turkey and, I would argue, with Pakistan. There's a lot happening behind the scenes that we don't know about. We don't know exactly what's going on. But I can confirm that any decision related to this two-week ceasefire was made at the highest level of the Iranian government. I'm talking about the leadership—about everyone involved. They know what they're doing. Without the confirmation of the Supreme Leader of Iran, they're not capable of doing anything, and people should understand that.

Because when we talk about this—many people in the West just don't have a comprehensive understanding of how the Iranian government works. They don't know how it functions. The Trump administration had no clue about what was going on in Iran. That's why they were miscalculating. They were mostly dependent on Israel and Mossad—not to inform them, but to deceive them, to push them, to drag them into a new war. That's why they're failing, in my opinion—failing in negotiations, in the war, in everything related to Iran. But after all, the leadership of Iran—the whole leadership, the Supreme Leader together with the people below him—they're all aligned. You know, when they move toward a decision like a ceasefire or negotiations with the United States, they take all of that into account. And it could very well be a unified decision on their part.

#Pepe

Do you think this has been well explained to Iranian public opinion, especially over the past two days? Why are we going to Islamabad? From what you see on Iranian Twitter, where it's exploding

against the decision, and in the Iranian media—for instance, Shariatmadari at Kayhan newspaper—I interviewed him, Nima, twenty-something years ago. As you know, he’s an old fox. He’s essentially against it, for example. And Kayhan is a very influential newspaper in Iran.

#Nima

And we have to understand, Pepe, that always—always—the role of the leadership, the Supreme Leader of Iran, has been to stay right in the middle of these movements, to the left and to the right, and make the right decisions. That’s why, you know, when you see Shariatmadari, as you mentioned, the head of the Kayhan news outlet—he’s so important, by the way.

#Pepe

Yes, yes.

#Nima

When it comes to the right, he’s as influential as Zarif is to the left. You know, they’re both influential in Iran when it comes to the left and right. But what’s important is the decision on the part of the leadership. The leadership lets all these sides talk the way they’re thinking, the way they’re feeling about the conflict. But the leadership makes its own decisions, together with all the officials involved in the government and above the government. I think this is the reality of what’s happening in Iran. Pepe, do you have any other questions?

#Pepe

Maybe later, because I was struck by some things that—was it the Iranian ambassador in Pakistan, maybe?—who said that the Iranian delegation is going to Islamabad, even considering public opinion that’s not exactly supportive. Well, he admitted it. And they have to, because if you follow the discussions in Iran, even from abroad, it’s obvious that the vast majority of public opinion is against any accommodation. So this obviously had to be considered by the Supreme Security Council, and of course by the leader himself. So it’s a very sophisticated, calculated bet that they can navigate the Americans at the same table. It’s going to be very hard to extract any concessions, so maybe the best they’re aiming for is to stop the bombing—and that’s not guaranteed. Exactly.

#Nima

Basically, what Iran is asking for, Pepe, the basic points are the cessation of war on all fronts—just stopping this war. I think that could be achieved through these talks. I’m talking about Lebanon. You can’t leave Lebanon out; they’re part of what’s going on. That’s why the Iranian government—well, that’s why that’s the first point, by the way, in the ten-point plan.

#Pepe

In the tenth point.

#Nima

Basically, the first point is that. Then they're talking about other, straightforward sanctions. I think, finally, what we're going to get with these negotiations—and Donald Trump is not capable of making any sort of agreement, in my opinion, after all—is that they cannot change the reality of what's going on in the Strait of Hormuz. It's going to stay under the control of the Iranian government. They're going to compensate for the cost of the war and the devastation in Iran by what they're going to charge—mostly the GCC countries in the Persian Gulf—charge them because of the war, the devastation of the war. That's going to be it. And I don't see Donald Trump being capable of removing the sanctions on Iran. They're not going to do that.

#Pepe

He can't, because it's Congress—and the U.S. Congress will never remove these sanctions. These are eternal.

#Nima

This is going to be some sort of ending to the conflict, or some kind of ceasefire—we can put it that way—without reaching a major agreement between the two parties. But the reality is that Donald Trump can't do anything more than that. Because if they go back to war, that's not going to change the battlefield. I don't see anything happening in his favor, even with a ground invasion of Iran. What are they going to achieve? It's just going to cause more casualties.

#Pepe

And it's not going to change anything in Hormuz. It's not going to bring a regime change. Exactly—and it's going to be an enormous humiliation, because there will be a lot of body bags.

#Nima

It's going to be. It's going to be. And Iranians know how to fight on the ground, Pepe. They're so good. They're so good. I saw this with my own eyes. I don't know—exactly. That's why I don't like this happening, because we don't need these kinds of casualties. We don't need this kind of killing on the battlefield, on the ground, because that's enough. The air bombing—you know, the recent U. S. raid on Iran—has shown the capabilities of Iran, even in a location that was supposed to be a

surprise attack, by the way. But Iran managed to respond to the U.S. in a way that even Donald Trump himself can understand. He had to explain the whole operation for more than an hour. He's never done such a thing. Just look at the history.

He was just explaining every detail. You have to understand what's happening—what has happened—that Donald Trump needed to go that far to explain what took place during the operation. And I think we're going to learn more as time goes by. We'll learn what the reality was, which is closer to what we understand from the raid, not the rescue operation. What Donald Trump is trying to do right now is put pressure—putting pressure again—on NATO. He's asking desperately, as he tried to negotiate with the CISO, asking NATO countries to send forces to the Middle East, to the Strait of Hormuz. I don't know how in the world he thinks the situation has changed, or that Europe would change its mind about the Strait of Hormuz.

#Pepe

Your understanding. They're scared to death. First of all, they don't have the weapons or the forces for that. Second, they're scared to death. Third, NATO is imploding from within, just like the EU. It's the same thing. By the way, during this visit by that absolutely repulsive Dutchman leading NATO, he was asked directly about the extermination of civilization post, and obviously he dodged the question. He didn't answer. He just said, "I absolutely support President Trump." So how should we interpret this? There's no other interpretation—NATO basically condones and supports genocide.

Not only the genocide in Gaza—we already knew that—but this threat of exterminating an entire civilization by the President of the United States. And this idiot—well, I won't even say he's an idiot, he's much worse than that. I can't say it because it would be censored. He basically says, "Yeah, I agree with it." So this is the official European elite position on genocide of the Other, in a Lévi-Strauss sense—anywhere, as long as they're not European. It's extremely worrying, because it's a mix of extreme arrogance, an absolutely pitiless view of the world, morally bankrupt, spiritually bankrupt, and at the same time, cowardice. Okay, you don't agree with the Strait of Hormuz?

Okay, go over there with your fleet and try to unblock it yourself. Of course not. They're cowards. They'll never do it. And on that, at least, Trump is calling out their cowardice. He said, look, you're not happy with it, you have a few days to send a fleet to unblock Hormuz. Is it going to happen? Of course not. Everybody knows it's not going to happen. So they can only posture, in their mix of aggressiveness and extreme cowardice—and, of course, moral bankruptcy to the Milky Way already. It's absolutely disgusting. But it's good to have, once in a while, these crystal-clear snapshots of the psyche of the collective West. And this was another case, you know.

#Nima

Yeah. You know, Pepe, the other point that was so interesting was the panic. Since they announced the ceasefire, there was panic in Israel, in the Persian Gulf, in the GCC countries. They were

panicking. You saw what happened. I think the way Israel attacked Lebanon came out of panic. It's not out of...

#Pepe

It is. It is. Blind rage. Yes, yes, yes. Absolutely correct. And the UAE... the UAE is complicated, Nima. They are at war with Iran side by side with Israel. So Iran will have to deal with the UAE, I would say sooner rather than later, in a very, very hardcore way. Of course, we all knew they were part of the Zionist Axis. We all knew that all those promises of investment in the American economy and all that—we all knew that Dubai and Abu Dhabi are extensions of the empire of chaos and of the Epstein syndicate interests. But now they are at war, de facto, against Iran. So, you know, they didn't even comment on those meetings in Islamabad or the ceasefire, where we have a lot of Muslim countries involved. We have Turkey, Egypt, etc.

Saudi Arabia. So how to deal with Saudi Arabia? And Saudi Arabia is a full member of BRICS. How are China and Russia going to deal with the UAE right now? And they are at war with a full BRICS member, Iran. So this is going to be one of the, I would say, most complicated issues from now on. And Iran has to find a way to immobilize the UAE—immobilize and marginalize the UAE. This is going to be very difficult, especially because they have a lot of Iranian money over there, right, Nima? Well, if they really promise that they're going to confiscate Iranian assets in Dubai, oh, this will be the straw breaking the Emirati camel's back. Ah, you're going to confiscate our money? Okay, just wait. What's going to happen to your oil industry?

#Nima

I think if they continue with this sort of attitude—getting closer to Israel and attacking Iran—they're going to disappear from the scene in the Middle East. I'm not talking about the country; I'm talking about the leadership and the people who joined the Omani government. I see they'd be in a much better position if they joined Oman, if they were part of Oman.

#Pepe

It's what the Iraqi scholars—oh, I love those Iraqi scholars—have been saying for a few weeks now. Eventually, the only place for them to go is back to Oman.

#Nima

Exactly. That's why, you know, we had General Kane, Pepe, in that briefing with Donald Trump, and the way he was describing what had happened in Iran—he said something really important. He said that everyone in Iran was armed, with rifles, with small guns. And this shows how they were somehow deceived—by, I don't know, Mossad, by the CIA—into thinking that Iranians would actually welcome them invading their country. This is huge, Pepe.

#Pepe

Of course, but this is Zionist disinformation, which is something they excel at. They are masters of disinformation. They're very good at infiltrating, very good at cultivating fifth columns. And that's it. Then they're very good in the PR department, selling that to gullible Americans—including gullible American politicians, especially gullible American politicians. It's what they do best. The problem is when they actually infiltrate. For instance, they infiltrated Hezbollah, and I'd say probably a few sectors of the IRGC. This is very, very worrying. Extremely worrying.

#Nima

You know what, yeah, I think you're right. And on the other hand, you see the same thing happening in the IDF. They have spies—Iranian spies—in the IDF. And today we learned they found another one, another Iranian spy in the IDF forces. But the problem is, or the difference is, Iran doesn't seek any sort of assassination. Basically, they want to find something strategic, something important for their operations against Israel. But on the Israeli side, whenever they manage to recruit someone to spy for them, they want to find the location of the leadership, the location of people to assassinate them. Nothing beyond that is happening. That's why you see two different attitudes on the part of the Iranians and the Israelis. Their policy is mostly based on assassinations. On the other hand, you see—even we had those documents coming out of Dimona. You remember that?

#Pepe

Yes, absolutely. They look for privileged information. And the Israelis are just like, "Okay, we found this guy, let's kill him." That's it. There's nothing strategic about it. Absolutely—the approaches are completely different.

#Nima

And that works perfectly for their propaganda—that they're capable, they're doing this and that, you know, they're assassinating the leadership. Even in the briefing yesterday, Pete Hegseth was mentioning, "We have destroyed much of the leadership in Iran, together with equipment, together with their army." This is some sort of propaganda machine for the mainstream media. And Iran doesn't need that, because they don't have dominance over the mainstream media.

#Pepe

Exactly, yeah. Another question—go ahead, if you allow me. A very quick one. As you see it, would you say that Iran is not attacking Israel directly as harshly as they could? It's like they're holding back a little, and maybe at a later stage they'll go for the kill. But for the moment, it's just like... compared to the amount of destruction they caused to American military bases and many

installations across the Persian Gulf. So when you compare that to the direct strikes against Israel, I'd say there's an element of suspicion—it could be much harsher than that.

#Nima

Definitely. Because they're trying to be measured in how they respond to Israel. They don't want to go 100% on Israel; they don't want to reveal everything. That's why they keep saying, "We have surprises." If the escalation continues, those surprises are coming. They know what they're talking about, but they don't want to use them yet. They don't want to put them out there because that would reveal everything they have. You're thinking strategically—you're not going to do that to yourself, because you'd disarm yourself before using them. That's the reality. Because in one part of the attack on Dimona, you know, they just targeted Dimona to show the Israelis.

#Pepe

It was a demonstration, right?

#Nima

They can hit the target. They can hit everything in Israel. You know, there are a lot of surprises from the Iranian army if this continues, because they've been talking about it. They were honest about it—everything they said, they meant it, and they used it. So I have no doubt they have a lot in their arsenal to use against Israel and against any American aggression if the war continues. And somehow, it seems to me that Donald Trump has perceived that so far. I don't know how deep that goes, but let's see. Yeah.

#Pepe

Well, certainly nobody in his mediocre entourage. And he himself is, because he's fed extremely filtered information every day, Nima. He never knows anything in depth about what's going on on the battlefield, not to mention the political chessboard. He has no idea. And, of course, the people around him—because they are so mediocre, sycophants and ass-lickers—he can never have a true picture on any front whatsoever. The only thing he actually pays attention to, and we know this by observing how he reacts, is the stock market, the oil market, and the bond market. Apart from that, nothing else.

#Nima

If he were a wise person, I'd say he would just dismiss Pete Hegseth right away, right now. Because Pete Hegseth is one of the biggest problems. The guy comes out like he's playing a movie or something. He's not real. The guy is not real.

#Pepe

Proud, horribly misinformed, prejudiced, with the brains of a four-year-old once again, and so on. You can imagine—this guy is making decisions for the whole gigantic Pentagon machine. No wonder most of these generals are appalled. And there's nothing they can do about it.

#Nima

Exactly. Pepe, how do you see the way China and Russia view the reality of the Strait of Hormuz? Do you think China has any kind of difficulty with the Strait of Hormuz? Or Russia—how does Russia see it? Go ahead, what's your understanding?

#Pepe

No, Russia—they're reaping the benefits because they're selling oil like crazy. For them, this is a perfect arrangement, right? China is immensely complicated. For instance, I spend a lot of time reading some of the best Chinese analysts, translated from Mandarin to English. And they're too cautious, most of them. I'm generalizing a little bit, but among the best ones—Fudan University, Renmin University, Tsinghua, etc.—they still hold the U.S. in, they still deal with the U.S. with some sort of awe. They're still under, you know, all that glimmer and glitz of the superpower. And some of their analyses are conditioned by what they learn from American mainstream media.

It's horrible. They're Chinese analysts, you know. Once again, I'm not talking about all of them. I like the really radical ones, but there aren't many. Because in China, as you know, the directives about what can be published are very strict. You have to align closely with the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Foreign Relations, and so on. So deviations are very, very hard. In terms of independent critical thinking, it's very difficult. When you find a Chinese analyst who breaks the mold, it's a breath of fresh air—but there aren't many, unfortunately, right?

For instance, many of them still don't understand the proxy war in Ukraine in detail—and they should. It's their neighbor. And in Iran, of course, their main concern is China's energy security, so most of the discussion focuses on that. And of course, you won't get much information on how China is actually helping Iran in practical terms. It's very hard to get that. You find little nuggets here and there, right? And now they're in an extremely complex position, because as much as some aspects of the semi-closed Strait of Hormuz help China in terms of the petroyuan, payments on SIPs, etc., not all the tankers going to China pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

So China is getting less energy via the Strait of Hormuz than before, and they have to compensate for that. Of course, they have different sources. Gas—they can get more from Turkmenistan, from the Power of Siberia, from Myanmar. Oil—they can get more from Kazakhstan, through the pipelines

that arrive in Xinjiang. But obviously, they were always counting on that free flow of energy via the Persian Gulf, not only from Iran but from the other Persian Gulf players. So they're squeezed into a complicated position, and at the same time, they don't want to antagonize the U.S. frontally.

That's not the Chinese strategy—it's more of a diplomatic, playing-Go kind of approach. But at the same time, they're doing the best they can to profit from the situation, because they see the empire enfeebled, going crazy. And this was provoked by a mid-sized power, not even a superpower. It's not China or Iran or Russia—it's Iran, a mid-sized power. So they're trying to profit from it as best they can. But it's a very complicated position. And this decision they made—to suggest to Iran, "Go to Islamabad and try to examine where this ceasefire comes from and where it could possibly lead"—this is a very risky position, because now China is directly implicated in the process. Directly. Directly. This was China telling Iran; it was not China telling Pakistan. That's a completely different story.

Before, it was the Muslim countries—Pakistan, for example—they went to China. Remember the first time when Dar, the foreign minister of Pakistan, went to Beijing to talk to Wang Yi, and they had that five-point plan or declaration about peace? That led nowhere. But this time, during the negotiations over the past two or three days, the Chinese, at the last minute, explicitly suggested to Iran: go to Islamabad. So now they have skin in the game. And they have to assure—of course, you won't see that in Chinese media anywhere—but basically, they told Iran, "Look, we're going to be your guarantor in the background, whatever happens." And obviously, Tehran agreed. So if things start to derail, Tehran is going to pick up the phone to Beijing and say, "Okay, where's your help now?"

So China is now in a very delicate position, which they weren't in just a few days ago. I was trying to find some nuggets about that on Guancha—I follow Guancha a lot. They've republished my articles, and I met the director in Shanghai. I couldn't find anywhere, even a paragraph or two, talking about this new Chinese position. So it's complicated, Nima, and for all of you in the audience, to follow China as a foreigner. It's extremely complicated. It depends on us cultivating and establishing relationships of trust, which is something I've been doing for years, actually. But it takes time. You have to meet them in person—it's not just email. No, you have to go there, have lunch together, talk off the record. When they start trusting you, that's when you begin to get privileged information. But it's a long process.

#Nima

Because they're not that vocal about what they think.

#Pepe

They are not—no, not at all. But this is the way the Chinese handle extremely sensitive foreign policy issues. It applies to everything. And in some cases—this is something I heard, I can't say from

where, from diplomatic sources—they told me, “Look, sometimes the Chinese bet on the wrong horses and they don’t realize it. And when they do, it’s too late.” This has nothing to do with Iran. They know exactly who they’re dealing with because there’s a strategic relationship. There’s that \$400 billion, 25-year plan—energy, infrastructure—it’s different. And Iran is the key Chinese ally, I would say, in the western part of Eurasia.

No question about that. That’s different. But they refuse to be directly involved—especially now—in a war that isn’t theirs. Ultimately, it’s an indirect war against them as well, because if Iran falls, no question, they lose their major ally in West Asia. This would be a mega, mega blow for the Chinese, and they know it very well. So they have to protect their ally. The most challenging aspect is that it’s very hard to know how far they’ll go. None of us know, you see? But I’m sure the conversation at the highest levels between Tehran and Beijing is very, very good. It’s very, very good. This helps. Yeah.

#Nima

I think before wrapping up, Pepe, we have to look at the alternative in West Asia. This war has diminished the image of the GCC countries in the eyes of the Russians and the Chinese. That’s a huge factor right now.

#Pepe

Enormous. Wow. Especially because one of them is a BRICS member. Yes. And Egypt, which is close by, is also a BRICS member. And Saudi Arabia is on the fence. We don’t know where Saudi Arabia stands. Is Saudi Arabia in BRICS or not? They don’t know because they’re hedging so much. But we already see the split, Nima. And I’m sure all of you, our audience, are already seeing it. Qatar and Oman have split. They’ve made it very clear that they’ll align with Iran, whatever happens next. So the GCC is already broken in half. Bahrain is broke, right? The whole thing is collapsing. Bahrain has no future—it’s a non-player in the future of the GCC. Kuwait still hangs in the balance; they could even be reabsorbed into Iraq in the near future. Everything is possible. So once again, the big question is: okay, what about Saudi Arabia and the Emirates?

And the Emirates isn’t the whole thing. We’re talking basically, for instance, Sharjah—cool, Fujairah—cool. The problem is Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Dubai’s business model is dead; we already know that. And we don’t know if they’ll be able to reinvent themselves. Doing what? Nobody will want to live in Dubai anymore or do business there. Forget it. And Saudi Arabia—that’s the key to the whole story. MBS has some very serious decisions ahead. Everything he promised to the Trump administration, all the deals related to the IMEC corridor—which has collapsed—everything related to the Abraham Accords and all that, the whole thing is collapsing in front of them. So how are they going to—well, we don’t know how they’re going to play their next hand. And they don’t have many cards left. No, exactly. The GCC is already a mess, Nima. It’s already split.

#Nima

No, exactly. Muito obrigado, Pepe.

#Pepe

I think we've only scratched the surface, because it's getting more and more complicated.

#Nima

It's too difficult right now to predict what will happen, I think. There's a lot still in play on both sides.

#Pepe

And for the global economy.

#Nima

Yeah, for the global economy.

#Pepe

Exactly. It's probably one of the few things that the baboon of Barbaria, I would say, intrinsically knows—that if this war goes on, the global economy will be destroyed. And he'll be responsible for it, you know, to the end of history. No wonder he wants an off-ramp. It has to do, of course, with the midterm elections, all that internal crap. But, of course, it's also about his legacy. Don't forget, we're dealing with a guy with an ego the size of the Milky Way. And for the moment, he's being ridiculed everywhere.

#Pepe

Thank you, Pepe. Thank you, my friend. Thank you very much. Thanks to all of you—our global audience. And don't forget, the struggle continues.

#Nima

Exactly, keep going.

#Pepe

The road to sovereignty goes on forever. Sure. Obrigado. Tchau, tchau.

#Nima

You.